PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT WORKS OF NAMITA GOKHALE

A SYNOPSIS

Submitted by

PRIYADHARSHINI P

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ANAND NAGAR, KRISHNANKOIL – 626 126

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1. INTRODUCTION

India is a multicultural and multi-traditional society with numerous elegances for women's lives. Women, in general are categorised into married women, working women, educated women, non-educated women, and physically disabled women. The ongoing issues related to crimes against women became a daily basis news in various newspaper articles, social networking sites, novels, movies, and in media. These issues and problems related to sufferings of women are the central themes of Namita Gokhale's writings, one of the notable Indian writers who brings in forefront the problems faced by women even in this modern era. She has written several works and this research has focused mainly on the three notable works of Namita Gokhale. The select works for this research includes *The Book of Shadows*, *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa*, and *Things to Leave Behind*. This research aims to explore the portrayal of women by substantiating it with several popular theories by famous theorists. The select theories are feminism, liberal feminism, existentialism, and ipseity disturbance.

The second wave of feminism focuses on equality, women's problems, and overturning their complications. It mainly deals with familial issues, domesticity, the workplace, and reproductive rights. Also, inequality, domestic violence, and domestic murder are also discussed by sub-theories of feminism. For example, Betty Friedan, talks about women's education and the unsatisfactory life of women. Her observations include the societal assumption that women could find fulfillment through the modes of being a housewife, by marrying, and by raising their child.

The novel, *The Book of Shadows*, begins with the character, Rachita Tiwari, protagonist of the novel who leads her life between memories of her fiance and her unstructured face. She exhibits her sense of alienation and searches for her identity. She leads her life alone. Despite losing her face, she remains optimistic. The memories of the past enlighten her present life. She proves that women can live their life with their self-esteem.

The following select novel for this research is Namita Gokhale's *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa*. This work is about the life of married woman named Priya. She sacrifices her life for her husband and her twin son unmindful of her own dreams and aspirations. Later, she realises her mistake and overcome her problems. Her middle-class life affects her married life, but she manages in all ways. Then Priya decides not

to change her life because of others' opinions. For example, she wears regular sarees at her family parties, but her friends suggest that Priya select things like being a minister's wife. Priya didn't consider others' opinions to change her life. She decided to choose things as she liked.

The subsequent select work of this research is Namita Gokhale's *Things to Leave Behind.* This work focuses on the character of Tilottama. She faces many problems after her marriage. For example, Tilottama shows interest in studying English and Mathematics, but her relatives do not permit or even allow her to study. Tilottama breaks their opinion of women for cooking, cleaning, and so on.

These select works of Namita Gokhale are discussed with different theories. The discussion of women's lives with the chosen theories will give a detailed note on the portrayal of women characters in select works of Namita Gokhale.

2. REVIEW

The literature review is the most important part of every research. This research focuses on women's lifestyle with Namita Gokhale's select works. Various secondary sources conduct a literature review. The literature review concentrates mainly on feminism, liberal feminism, existentialism, and ipseity disturbance. This research focuses on women and their development, so the researcher reviewed various other studies related to women's lives.

2.1 Studies Related to Feminism:

The study of Crowe discusses Connell theory of feminism. In this study, the researcher employs Connell's ideas of feminism in two ways. They are the divisions of women in feminism and men in feminism. This research discusses man's opinions about feminism because feminism believes men are also the supporters of a woman's life [1].

Sulistyo's study reveals the ideas of feminism through the work *The Palace of Illusions*. Through the character Krishna, feminism issues are reflected in this work. The male character in this study is supported by feminist philosophy. The researcher behind this study speaks out in support of women [2].

Another study by Saha's study discusses the life of women within the realms of society and family. This discussion supports "women genetically designed to be multi-skilled and multi-talented". Women are leading a successful life as a mother, sister,

wife, workers, and so on. This study also discusses the different stages and various problems faced by women in their life [3].

The study of Honig's highlights the idea of feminism through the relationship between father and child. Women go through several life stages, such as sister, child, mother, wife, and so on. These women's life stages are contrasted with those of men. In this study, the researcher discusses man as father, brother, and husband [4].

Desmawati's study of feminism analyses the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. In this study, the researcher evaluates different types of feminism and analyses the reflection in Alcott's select novel. The select theories for this study are Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Existentialist feminism, and Radical feminism. According to this study, feminism is about women eliminating all marginalised habits in society and at home [5].

The study of Haiyan analyses feminism in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. Also, this research focuses on victoria age and feminism. The researcher Haiyan focuses primarily on the Victorian era because each era presents different obstacles to women's life. So in this study, the researchers only concentrates on a particular age, and Victorian age published work *Jane Eyre* written by Charlotte Bronte [6].

2.2 Studies Related to Liberal Feminism:

John Stuart Mill is a renowned liberal thinker, and he has written so many works, related to liberal feminism. Various authors adopt his theory for their studies. For instance, the study of Tofik Kurohman abbreviates liberal feminism through Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* through the character of Bathsheba. Kurohman explicates Mill's ideas reflected in the protagonist Bathsheba who is brave, strong-minded, hardworking, determined, responsible, and independent. Kurohman mentions that women have to be given equal liberty to do something, especially to go to work. In this way, Kurohman adopts Mill's *On Liberty* concept of liberal feminism [7].

The study of Eidelwe is highlights liberal feminism in the movie *Joy*. In the movie, the main character Joy comes under the concept of liberal feminism. She is an employee as well as a housewife. She sacrifices her dream of taking care of her children and family. Also, she has no time to take care of herself and explore her dreams. Joy finally decides to pursue her dream, not caring about the obstacles and opinions of

others. The author has adopted Mill's *Essays on Equality, Law, and Education* in this study [8].

Wollstonecraft's feminist idea aptly reflects in Aenun Nahdiyati's study. This study focuses on the work of *Miss. Potter*. The main character Miss. Potter has liberal feminist characteristics. Miss Potter likes to choose her life partner as she likes, but her parents do not allow her to get married as she wishes. So she determines to fight with the age-old tradition of patriarchal culture [9].

The study of Hastutiand et al., discuss working women and their life. Liberal feminism that exists in this movie *North Country* can be identified by Tong's theory. Josey is an important character who uses to earn money by working in the mine. Furthermore, in the workplace, she struggles to face the other workers because she works where many men are working. In the mine, Sherry is another woman who is treated wrongly by some men in the mine. This reason makes Josey bravely fight for equal rights [10].

The study of Wulandari has utilised Friedan's liberal feminism ideas as a supporting theory to find the reflections of liberal feminism in the novel *A Woman is No Man*, written by Etaf Rum. The author discussed the reflection of liberal feminism in Arab women's life. It deals with how inferior women become superior. For instance, in Arabian countries, men take the upper hand, and women should obey them. Because of this, they are forbidden from receiving education. The protagonist Deya opposes the conventional norms and stands firm in receiving her higher education [11].

2.3 Studies Related to Ipseity Disturbance:

The study of Mujralis analyses ID in two works *Luka and the Fire of Life Haroun* and *The Sea of Stories* written by Salman Rushdie. Luka is the main character who losses his life to save his father. Mujralis uses ipseity in Luka's life to explain her loss of identity. Luka here includes the study of the uniformity of individual across subjective time, whereas ipseity relates to the analysis of the equality of person during cosmic time [12].

Harvey's study used Shakespeare philosophy from the book *Hamlet*. It studies the contingents of intents, purposes and impossibilities. These self-relations are incorporated with ipseity, in addition, compared with its domains. The domains are compared through the sympathy of ipseity. Here Maya represents ipseity, alterity, and

community. Maya's ID is an awareness of self that identifies the self with other-selves [13].

The study of Rana discusses ipseity in *A Matter of Time* written by Shashi Deshpande. The ipseity focuses on the three women character from the select novel Kalyani, Sumi and Aru. Emotion, suffering and individuality are seen as the major symptoms of ipseity. The study focuses on Aru character because she reflects the ipseity symptoms. That Aru's after her father's death, she does not like to live her life with her family. Because she feels that society and family focus on her past life rather than her future, so her alienation makes her fall into ID [14].

2.4 Studies Related to Existentialism:

Kohzadi and Azizmohammadi's article discusses existentialism in the novel *The Caste* written by Franz Kafka. K is the central character of this novel. He observes the people who are living around him. Amalia is one of the essential characters who like to live her life as she wants, but her village customs force her to live with the castle. But she finds her own identity for her life. K compares his life with Amalia, but he cannot come out from the castle. Thus, existentialism reflects through the character Amalia [15].

Yusuf and Susilo's study on the work *Cigarette Girl* novel is written by Ratih Kumala. The existentialism theory is applied to the main character through feminism. In the feminist movement, many researchers discuss that women are physically and mentally weak. But existentialism in feminism discusses the awareness of women about their identity to destroy the hierarchy that is harmful for woman's position. The researcher is used Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism theory to analyse existentialism in feminism. Roemaisa is the main woman character, and she lost her husband. After her loss of a husband, she started her new life. But, society did not allow her to choose her life as her wish. Because there is a separate life for widowed women, Roemaisa breaks the rules, she becomes a strong character because women can work and become intellectuals and transcend its boundaries [16].

The study of Snyman abbreviates existentialism through Henri Fauconnier's notorious novel *The Soul of Malaya (Malaisie)*. Existentialism reflects in the set of the colonial period of Malaya. In this autobiographical novel, the author says about the First World War. The colonial period and world war exaggerated the Malaya people's

culture and life. Fauconnier's way of "Being in the World" means coming to grips with the unknowable and, in doing so, finding hope for fulfilment. He is unconcerned with the fact that his methods are unorthodox. The primary notion explored with existentialism is a life open to "Being in the World" [17].

Huang's study discusses existentialism through the novel *Fortress Besieged* written by Qian Zhongshu. The protagonist, Fang Hongjian, returns from Europe after his studies. He returned from his hometown during the world war and observed the people's lifestyle. The people want to break the chain of struggle and escape. But at present, people are given crucial choices in life. Fang Hongjian breaks off his arranged engagement with Miss Zhou and marries Zhao Xinmei. He chooses his life as he likes. Also, he withdraws his weak protest when his father threatens to cut off financial support [18].

The study of Whipple and Tucker affirms existentialism in both film and novel. In this study, the researchers discuss existentialism from four applications. The four divisions are responsibility, freedom, existential isolation, meaninglessness, and death, which are associated with characters in the novel and film. The main character Josef from the novel *When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession* pursues to quiet the worries of death, purposelessness, loneliness, and liberty by allowing life to "choose him." These concepts also reflect Joel's character in the movie *Eternal Sunshine* of the spotless Mind [19].

2. 5 Research Gap

- The analyses are focus on the summary but are unsatisfiable in critical analysis of the texts.
- There are numerous gaps identified, including women's struggle and empowerment, internal strengthening and decision-making, which are generally discussed in other studies.
- Women's life is generally discussed but their stages, like childhood, motherhood, being a wife, and role of being a caretaker, have not discussed detailly.
- Women fight with society for the freedom to choose and self-development need to be discussed in-depth.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research will bring out the clear observation for the portrayal of women. It compares the efficient use in their works past and the present. It discusses the various select theories to interpret life of women characters in Namita Gokhale's works.

- To analyse women's loss of hope and mental preparation to reface their problems.
- To examine how select works of Namita Gokhale have portrayed the life of women, the problem they face, and their spirit in coming out of their limited cocoons.
- To discuss women's involvement and capacity to improve themselves with the Women in Development (WID) approach.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

- This research has adopted qualitative method to analyse in-depth insights on select works of Namita Gokhale.
- Interpreting with select primary sources, using Women in Development (WID) approach to analyse the changing perspectives and improving space.
- Analysing the features of the WID approach involving self-development, preparation, access to education, and free choices are connected with the select works.
- The place of this research is focus on library research, because the research based on relative critical commentaries on the book and author.
- Purpose of this research is to portray the lives of women in select Namita Gokhale's works. The select works for this research are, *The Book of Shadows*, *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa,* and *Things to Leave Behind*.
- This research has used original texts of Namita Gokhale as primary sources and for reviewing, the researcher has collected secondary sources from multiple specific areas they are from Shodhganga, Google Scholar, Science Direct, Scopus and Scilet library secondary sources.

5. FEMINISM

Feminism is the literary theory that talks about women's social, political, and financial status. The traditional idea of feminism is that men and women justify equality in all jurisdictions. Feminists are attempting to disconnect inequality. Men receive more opportunities than women, so the feminist movement helps improve their societal position. There are a set of changes and freedom in women's lives, but still, there are many problems faced by women therefore still the feminist drive is performing.

Feminism talks about the ideas of women's lives and their rights. There are numerous theories about feminism that talks about women's life and their freedom. Women are in their childhood days, marriage life, as a wife, as a mother, and as a mother-in-law every stage having struggles. Women stand as learners, educators, rulers, slaves, and administrators at every level.

Steinem tells his view on feminism that, "Feminists believe in the equal rights and full equality of men and women" [20]. This reflects through Namita Gokhale's work *Things to Leave Behind*. The author supports the men and women in her novel. Namita Gokhale understands the situation of women and men in both private and public life. She supports men and women that is expressed through the character of Tilottama's husband. That he tells, "he lost his temper. 'You are jealous and small minded people!' he exclaimed. 'Besides, Tillie does not know any English and Englishmen either!'" [21]. Based on Tilottama's husband words, this research tells that Tilottama's husband is a solid supporter of his wife in all scenarios.

6. LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminism is a unique form of feminist theory. This theory mainly focuses on women and their liberal life. The woman can deal with their life by their wishes. Society believes that women naturally have less capacity to do their work. Also, they think that women are born to do men's work because they believe that women do not have any dreams to achieve in their lives. Some people believe that women are born to work for men. In the early period, many women tried to achieve their goals. But marriage life and house holding work broke them down.

The needs and goals of liberal feminism are different and immense. The thinkers of liberal feminists have different perspectives on women's life. As Ryan Musgrave

states, "Liberal feminism argues for women's rightful inclusion in the liberal category of the autonomous individual as the basic social unit, and the women likewise are according to individual rights connected to the category" [22].

Liberal feminism in the 1800s and early 1900s emerged to talk about having the freedom for opportunities. The thinkers of liberal feminists were concerned about gaining independence and equality and ending men's cruelty to women and individual liberty in the early period. They argued that there is no government, and the customs should respect their dream and prohibit their freedom. Philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Judith Sargent Murray, and Frances Wright argued for women in political power.

Liberal feminism is one of the select theories exploring women's lives in Namita Gokhale's select works. This research aims to explore liberal feminism in women's life. The women's lives are not in the same stage, but they improve themselves through their actions. At the same time, women also have the same liberty to deal with their lives.

A famous liberal thinker Betty Friedan tells, "The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way" [23]. She says women have to stand on their own to exhibit their strength. Likewise, Namita Gokhale portrays the character of Priya in the novel *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa*. Priya is a middle-class woman who married a minister. After marriage, her husband insists her to change her way of speech, style of walking, manners of eating, and her wishes. Because her husband feels that she should change her lifestyle from a middle-class woman to match his upper-class lifestyle. As he is a minister, he thinks that his wife should live according to society’s perception of the minister’s wife. However, Priya says, “I didn’t want to change the course of my life, I want to stand on my power” [24], which represents a liberal feminist attribute that reflects she does not want to change her middle-class life. She lives her life as she likes.

7. EXISTENTIALISM

The theory of existentialism says that every individual needs to be self-motivated or have self-esteem because individuals have the right to plan their life. Existentialism argues for people's way of life and rights. The structure of existentialism shows people's misery and action to achieve their aim and their obligations. Existentialist feminism talks to women to make them realise their existence. Namita

Gokhale's women characters of the select texts analyse their choice and existence which reflect the concepts of existentialism.

The theory of feminism and existentialist feminism have different motifs for women's existence. To know about the meaning of existentialist feminism, Simone de Beauvoir asks some questions. For women, Beauvoir asks the people, "what place they hold in this world, what place they should hold, where are the women?" [25]. She says, "Every person preoccupied with explaining his existence sees it as an unending yearning to transcend himself" [25]. Further, Beauvoir says, "men are the subject, while women are the objects. According to Beauvoir, existentialism occurs when a woman no longer sees herself as an object, but rather as a subject" [25].

8. PSYCHOANALYSIS

Ipseity Disturbance (ID) abbreviates self-disturbance and lack of consciousness. This research aims to highlight ID in Namita Gokhale's select works. The features of ID in this work exhibit the woman acid attack victim's alienation, imagination, and bodily experiences. Parnas and Sass tells about ID in loss of thought, "When reading, the afflicted individual may have the impression that the material is just being read somewhere else at the same time" [26].

Alienation makes the individuals who are affected by ID to live in isolated thoughts and emotions. This point of view about ID expresses by Parnas through states of depersonalisation as “perception of alienation with oneself, one's cognitive properties, ideas, feelings, and habits, in a level that previous elements in this area haven't grasped” [26]. This is reflected after the acid attack of Rachita. Her unstructured face is the reason for her alienation. Rachita says, “This house belongs to me, as I belong to this house here alone in the hills, watching the day turn to dusk, awaiting the dawn. ‘Alienation is a device to make the unfamiliar familiar,’ I said, addressing a sea of guileless faces, ‘or to render the familiar unfamiliar’” [27].

9. CONCLUSION

- Women’s problem in family and society and her personal issues are identified and discussed with the concepts of select theories.
- The select issues are focused to portray women’s life, problem and empowerment.

- Freedom of choice and enhancement are discussed with WID approach.
- Gender discrimination remains in society to motivate women's life and teaches them to overcome it. Some women lack on their way, but at present many women are trying to emancipate from the problem from home, culture, society, and psychology.
- Namita Gokhale's select works focus on women's lives, analysing their rights, empowerment, and equality with feminist approach.
- Women's emancipation and skill of exploring their problems are analysed with concepts of liberal feminism, which discusses the women who find solutions for their problem.
- The psychological problems of women character are include alienation, lack of self-identity, self-discrimination, and self-disorder. This research analysis the ideas of identity disturbance of the women characters in the select texts.
- Loss of life and hope reflect existentialism concepts, so women's problem in leading their life is discussed from the feminist point of view of existentialism. Accordingly, discussions incorporate women way of life and rights, misery, and action to achieve their aim and obligations.
- The discussion with Namita Gokhale's select texts and theories fulfils the objectives. Also, this research portrays women characters in Namita Gokhale's select texts with the ideas of established theories.
- Women are the focus in this research. Thus, select theories are applied to the lives of women. Some incidents are noted that men accept women's opinions. Accordingly, liberal feminism concepts are incorporated to examine and understand changes in the life of men and women.
- Lack of self-identity and self-discrimination are incorporated with the concepts of alienation, depression, and social anxiety. These are observed and discussed with the lives of women characters by analysing the ideas of ipseity-disturbance and existentialism.

9.1 Limitations

- The current research has focused on women characters in Namita Gokhale's select works. To portray the women characters, this research has selected some

important concepts from feminism, liberal feminism, existentialism, and ipseity disturbance.

- Discrimination and emancipation are major parts focused of this research to analyse characters of select works of Namita Gokhale.
- Motivations from men for women's success were noted and discussed with the concepts of feminism theory.
- This limitation provides scope and ideas for future researchers. Future researchers can contribute other parts of feminism theory to discuss women's life in Namita Gokhale's works.
- The future researchers can compare the texts, using different theories, because life of women in Namita Gokhale's works are portrayed different, but their motifs are same. Also, researchers can do detailed analysis with acid attack victims to analyse about violence against women.

10. ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

Chapter 1: Introduction

Indian literature in English is essential in this research. So, this research will give detailed notes of Indian literature in English. Next, this chapter focuses on women writers in Indian writers in English literature. The works of Namita Gokhale are selected in this research. So, the researcher focuses on Namita Gokhale's biography and her writing theme in her works. This research has selected three texts of Namita Gokhale, namely, *The Book of Shadows, Priya: In Incredible Indyaa,* and *Things to Leave Behind*. The researcher discusses the summary and theme of select works. This research focuses on portraying women characters. So, this research established feminism, liberal feminism, ipseity disturbance, and existentialism. Further, in the first chapter, the researcher includes literature review, research gap, the aim of this research, objectives of this research. The above discussions in the first chapter will note this research.

Chapter 2: Women Characters with the Feminist Approach

In the second chapter the researcher focuses on ideas of feminism theory in Namita Gokhale's *The Book of Shadows, Priya: In Incredible Indyaa,* and *Things to*

Leave Behind. The features of feminism strive for equal rights for men and women, emancipation of women, fight for their rights, freedom, and gender issues. This chapter adopted second wave feminists Gloria Steinem and Germaine Greer concept of feminism.

Chapter 3: Liberal Feminism: A Factual Movement of Marriage

In the third chapter, the research focuses on Namita Gokhale's *The Book of Shadows, Priya: In Incredible Indyaa,* and *Things to Leave Behind*. To discuss, the researcher has selected the ideas of liberal feminism theory, it emerged second wave of feminism. Liberal feminism theory is different from feminism and its other parts of the theory. Because liberal feminism theory focuses on women's lives and gives important for men's opinion. Liberal feminism has focused on the solution for women's problems rather than discussing the issue of women. This idea is also discussed in the third chapter with the select works of Namita Gokhale. This research adopts the concepts of thinkers of liberal feminism are John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft, Betty Friedan and Rosemarie Tong.

Chapter 4: Existentialist Feminism: An Investigation of Women Characters

In the fourth chapter, the researcher has selected existentialism theory to discuss the life of women characters in Namita Gokhale's select texts *The Book of Shadows, Priya: In Incredible Indyaa,* and *Things to Leave Behind*. Existentialism theory is divided into existentialism and existentialist feminism because both approaches have various ideas, and feminist existentialism has arguments based on women's issues. Existentialist feminism talks for women to realise the importance of their existence. This chapter adopt concepts from Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Chapter 5: Psychoanalysis of Women Characters

In the fifth chapter, the researcher focuses on ideas of ipseity disturbance in Namita Gokhale's *The Book of Shadows, Priya: In Incredible Indyaa,* and *Things to Leave Behind*. Psychological theory, ipseity disturbance has five domains: stream of consciousness, sense of presence/basic identity, bodily experience, demarcation, and existential reorientation. The features in five domains are compared and discussed with the select texts of Namita Gokhale. This chapter adopts the concepts from Richard

Schacht, A. Parnas and L. A. Sass ideas to compare with the select works of Namita Gokhale.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the sixth chapter researcher discusses the summary of this research. Also, in the last chapter, the researcher discusses limitations, and future recommendations

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1. P. Priyadharshini, S. Mohan, A. Hariharasudan, and A. Hassan, Psychological analysis of ipseity disturbance (ID) in Namita Gokhale's work The Book of Shadows, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, **17**(4) (2021), 2189-2199.

2. P. Priyadharshini, S. Mohan, J. Sangeetha, R. Kannan, Feminism: An Exploration of Pragmatics of Women Lives in Namita Gokhale's Works, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, **12**(2) (2021), 395-399. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1202.24

3. P. Priyadharshini, S. Mohan, and A. Hassan, A feministic Discourse of Existentialism in Namita Gokhale's Select Works, *World Journal of English Language*, **12**(2) (2022), 134-140. DOI: 10.5430/wjel.v12n2np134